

Sarasota, Florida -- Congressman Vern Buchanan and Sarasota County officials celebrated enactment of overdue legislation that authorizes funding to improve water quality in Sarasota Bay. The "House Water and Resources Development Act" (H.R. 1495), which recently became law authorizes \$10 million in federal funding for the Sarasota Bay Restoration Project to help protect groundwater that flows from streams and creeks into the Sarasota Bay National Estuary. Buchanan has also secured \$500,000 in actual funding for the project in the House-passed "Fiscal Year 2008 Interior and the Environment Appropriations Act".

"Sarasota Bay is a vital regional asset," said Buchanan. "Groundwater from failing septic systems is seeping in to Phillippi Creek and polluting the bay and its estuaries. Federal funding will help ensure the County has the necessary resources to connect moderate income homes near the creek to a central sewer system. By improving the quality of water that flows into the bay, this project will help protect public health and restore our natural resources."

Groundwater from failing septic systems has resulted in high concentrations of fecal coliform in various surface waters in Sarasota County and drainage basins, such as Phillippi Creek. The authorized funding would help replace septic systems and connect approximately 25,000 low to moderate income homes and businesses to a central sewer system in the Phillippi Creek basin and Sarasota Bay area.

"We are pleased that Congressman Buchanan has thrown his full support behind the goal of removing pollution from our bays and estuaries," said Nora Patterson, chair of the Sarasota County Commission. "Sarasota County has really stepped up to the plate with local funding to remove failing septic systems and federal assistance of this magnitude will mean a great deal to all Sarasota County residents."

The Phillippi Creek Septic System Replacement Program is underway to replace septic systems and connect approximately 15,400 homes and businesses to central sewers. The \$166 million, 11-year project includes the construction of collection systems, associated pumping stations, transmission facilities, program management, and early hook up incentives. Sarasota County has designated \$28 million in infrastructure surtax funds to help pay for the removal of obsolete and/or malfunctioning septic tanks. A total of 1,280 connections have been completed.

The seven year over-due WRDA bill also includes the following authorizations sought by

Buchanan:

- \$9.3 million in federal funding to help pay for beach renourishment at Lido Key Beach in Sarasota. Federal assistance with maintenance dredging of Manatee Harbor and efforts to restore water quality, hydrology and habitat in Charlotte Harbor
- \$20 million for regional water supply interconnectivity among Charlotte, Lee and Collier counties.